



## 2009 Year End Report

The Frederick County Commission on Disabilities meets monthly to discuss matters related to Frederick County residents who have disabilities. This is an active commission whose members not only discuss concerns, but actively participate to resolve issues.

Over the past year, the focus of the Commission was to increase public relations with the goal of increasing our visibility in the community.

The Commission utilized the Frederick News Post to increase our visibility. The Commission was highlighted in a resource article in the medical section of the paper; we were mentioned in a Slice of Life article; and press releases were submitted from award presentations.

Commission members participated in the Ft Detrick Equal Opportunity Office Conference and the Elder Expo. Both resource fairs provided the opportunity to connect with the public, distribute information about the commission, and provide resource information.

We revised the Key's to Independence resource booklet which lists agencies in the county that offer services to people who have disabilities. In this revised 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, we included Transit Plus services. We were again pleased to contract with the Scott Key Center which offered a competitive price and did a wonderful job printing the booklets. Commission members personally distributed booklets to local agencies, and booklets are available to the public upon request, as well as, now available to download through the Commission on Disabilities' website.

In April 2009, we presented our "Distinguished Service Award" to Eric Zimmerman, founder of the Buddy Project. The Buddy Project is an organization that solicits used computers, refurbishes them, and gives them to people who have disabilities. Having access to their own computer helps people with learning computer skills, job searches, surfing the internet and staying connected to family and friends. This was an award well deserved by Eric.

We also presented a Certificate of Appreciation in April 2009 to Proffitt and Associates Architects for their design plans for the Nature Center at Catocin Park. Proffitt and Associates Architects voluntarily submitted their plan to Gil House, member of the commission, for review. There were no accessibility errors in the plans for the Nature Center, which is to be commended.

Our second “Distinguished Service Award” of the year was awarded to Whitesell Pharmacy in October 2009. Whitesell Pharmacy is a local business serving the pharmacy needs of downtown Frederick for over 50 years. Their staff go above and beyond what is required as they provide individual attention to each customer they serve including assisting customers with accessing insurance benefits and resolving insurance issues, and contact with physicians and local provider agencies when ever needed to ensure the individual receives their proper medication. All customers of Whitesell Pharmacy are made to feel like they matter, that they are important, as they are often greeted by name, and treated with understanding and respect, regardless of their ability. Another well deserved award.

We appreciate the Board of County Commissioners with their help in presenting these awards.

This past year, Commission members worked diligently with County staff to update and link the Commission on Disabilities website with the Frederick County website. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with the County to further enhance our website allowing easier access to resource information for those residents for whom it benefits.

The Commission is pleased that our efforts to increase public relations and public visibility are being achieved. This is evident in the increase in the number of calls and referrals to our Ombudsman Program. The Ombudsman Program is for any county resident who may be having a problem accessing services or who feel their rights have been infringed upon. We can help resolve the problem, if possible, and/or provide guidance to services that may help. Over the past year, the number of Ombudsman referrals has doubled. Also, requests for copies of the Keys to Independence resource booklet has increased and are distributed on a weekly basis.

The Commission continues to be proud of our relationships with county departments and members of the local construction industry. Commission members Gil House and Richard Lind volunteer their time to meet with property owners, architects and engineers to ensure that ADA requirements are met. They are well known for their wealth of ADA knowledge, detailed response, and they have saved both the county and private industry time and money by pointing out ADA problems prior to construction.

In the coming year, our goal is continue our efforts with increasing public relations. We will continue to fine tune our website in an effort to make it easier to access; plan public service announcements; continue participation in resource fairs; and will complete a more extensive revision to the Key’s to Independence resource booklet. We look forward to increased opportunities to work with the public in addressing ADA and other concerns related to disabilities.

The Commission on Disabilities meet on the second Monday of each month at the Senior Center on Taney Avenue. Our meetings are always open to the public.